

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 4

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Miss Fannie Williams of Woodbine.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Miss Fannie Williams, a nationally renowned legend from Woodbine in Davidson County, who was known for her community involvement and longevity; and

WHEREAS, Miss Williams was an exemplary public servant who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a highly respected member of the Nashville community, Miss Fannie was born in 1893, near Whitsett Ave., the granddaughter of a slave who fought in the Civil War; her grandfather was deeded land in Woodbine, a community once known as Flat Rock, where Miss Fannie was born, raised and lived her entire life; and

WHEREAS, during her 107 years on this earth, Miss Fannie served with acumen as a practical nurse, a nursemaid, a cook, a community activist, and as a mentor, neighbor, and friend to those who were fortunate to know her; and

WHEREAS, always a dominant force in her community and in church affairs, Miss Fannie was an active and devout member of the Patterson Memorial United Methodist Church, where she served faithfully for many years in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, known to many as the founder of the Woodbine Community Organization, Miss Fannie organized the Woodbine Needle and Art Club in 1940; the club became a meeting place for those African American ladies in the community who were interested in sewing and studying literary materials to gather and socialize and learn of neighborhood concerns and to solve problems; and

WHEREAS, in 1955, Miss Fannie founded the Woodbine Community Welfare Organization, a group comprised of citizens from various racial backgrounds, to assist in neighborhood clean-up projects and other community activities; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, the current Woodbine Community Organization (WCO) was established, with Miss Fannie again serving as one of the organizers; this new organization embraced the entire community, both African American and Caucasians; and

WHEREAS, she was the spokesperson for WCO on various issues, but especially on the issue of saving Woodbine School; she inspired others and didn't take no for an answer; and

WHEREAS, the organization she founded has made a positive impact in the Woodbine community and has made a difference in the lives of many people. Today, many community members have achieved their GEDs because of the opportunities provided at the Woodbine Center. Potential "latch-key kids" have a high quality summer camp program available to them, and Head Start is providing an opportunity for children to get a head start in life. People are graduating from public assistance and are becoming self sufficient because of the programs available and opportunities offered at the Center, and now hundreds of WCO members own their own homes...All due to the vision and determination of one woman, Miss Fannie; and

WHEREAS, today, Miss Fannie's Center is a model of what communities can do; people from around the country call asking for advice on duplicating its success. No one knows how far the ripples will be felt of what was created by Miss Fannie's vision. Many people will have a brighter future due to that vision and the determination of one wise lady, Fannie Williams; and

WHEREAS, it has been noted by a WCO staff member that "Fannie became a symbol for all of us, for what we wanted Woodbine and the city to be. Her attitude, her commitment to

justice, and her willingness to get involved struck a real chord in the hearts of many of us, so that the things that Fannie accomplished had a bigger impact on us. In our hearts, when we saw her working on the street light project, the drainage problem, or any of the other causes, it was as if she became a symbol of what we all wanted to accomplish."; and

WHEREAS, her long history of community involvement is brought to life through these examples and by many others. When her well became contaminated in 1963, Miss Fannie contacted City Hall and fought to get public water piped into the community; she also led efforts in obtaining drainage improvements on her street. In 1989, Miss Fannie led a community campaign to get a traffic light and crosswalk installed at the dangerous intersection of Nolensville Road and Joyner Avenue; due to this successful campaign, this light has been reverently referred to as "Miss Fannie's Light"; and

WHEREAS, Miss Fannie was a dedicated worker, it was once stated that "If there was any work to get done, she was the first one to get started." Miss Fannie was "every inch a lady", meticulous in her housekeeping, and in keeping up with her friends; she knew her own mind, and had her own ideas; she was a great lady—one of the most loving and caring persons who ever lived; and

WHEREAS, in the early years of the WCO, when the Woodbine community was trying to save the Woodbine Elementary School in order to use it as a community center, Miss Fannie worked tirelessly, lobbying on behalf of this project and the community. She attended numerous community meetings, and she organized and planned strategy, wrote letters, and delivered speeches in front of the Metro Planning Commission, the Health Department Board of Directors, and at many Metro Council meetings where she met with city officials to secure their support for the project. She even threatened to go as far as to the top political office of the land in order to get what she wanted done--she would not be intimidated by anyone; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, she was honored by the Metro Council when the body renamed the street on which she lived as "Fannie Williams Street"; and

WHEREAS, always upbeat and known for her spunkiness, her abundance of energy and her determination, Miss Fannie was revered by all who knew her; many people would come to her for advice and guidance, because they respected her opinion, and they would listen wholeheartedly to her when she spoke; it has been said, "If you really didn't want an answer, then you didn't ask Miss Fannie; and

WHEREAS, Miss Fannie followed a set of seven guidelines in her daily life; they were: (1) "Commit your life daily to the purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ."; (2) "Spend some time each day meditating on God's word and applying it to your life."; (3) "Get rid of grudges."; (4) "Spend time each day getting closer and more intimate with your loved ones and friends."; (5) "Spend time each week having fun with other Christian friends."; (6) "Have a daily routine which includes work, play, and bringing personal satisfaction to yourself as we are convinced that the routine is God's will and for His well being and glorifying His name."; and (7) Do something special for at least one person each day around you."; and

WHEREAS, Miss Fannie was deeply devoted not only to her own family, but to all families; she possessed a deep love and concern for all children and firmly believed that every child deserved a good education; and

WHEREAS, she always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; Miss Fannie enjoyed the loving companionship of her husband, Will Henry, who passed away in 1936, and though they never had children of their own, Miss Fannie was a maternal figure to many children in the community and to her many nieces, nephews, cousins, and god children; and

WHEREAS, Miss Fannie will be sorely missed by her devoted sister, Julia Wills; brother and sister-in-law, Fred L. and Geraldine Hall of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; sister-in-law, Della Hall; nieces, Mary Woods, Mildred Tillman, Eva Bradley, Shirley Davis, Cora Farris, Frances Summers, Josephine (Mrs. Reuben) Ridley, Fannie Mai (Mrs. Elihu) Thelma Mitchell, Mai Alice (Mrs. Samuel) Walden, Joyce Logan, Julia Owens, and Christine E. (Mrs. Ronald) Hall-Word; nephews, the Reverend James (and Lucy) McCord, and John Hall, Jr.; a great nephew, Timothy

Wayne Hall; a cousin, John Randolph; numerous great-nieces, great great-nieces, great great great-nieces, great-nephews, great great-nephews, and great great great-nephews; god children, Joyce Brown Davis, Carolyn Brown Keeses, Fay Adams, Myron Moore, Daryl Owens, and a host of other relatives, friends, and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Miss Fannie leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; when it comes to caring and love for others, Miss Fannie's life should be the benchmark that we all strive to attain; and

WHEREAS, in her funeral address, entitled "She Left the World a Better Place," Mr. Rod Williams reverently wrote, "Miss Fannie did things because they were the right things to do. She fought for justice. And there was no black or white with Miss Fannie. 'God loves all His children,' I have heard her say. Miss Fannie left the world a better place than she found it. We are all blessed who had the privilege of knowing her."; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to commemorate the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being, remembering her loving spirit and her many efforts to help the needy and her fellow citizens of the Woodbine community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor the memory of Miss Fannie Hall Williams, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family and many friends of "Miss Fannie".

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.